

# building blocks



August 2005

The online newsletter of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority  
Vol. 1, issue 4

## HOUSING AUTHORITY ELECTS NEW LEADERSHIP

**A** new era for Michigan's affordable housing community has been launched with the election of Florise Neville-Ewell as chair and

Bernard Gliberman as vice chair of the MSHDA board, the Authority announced. Their election follows the recent appointment of Michael

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*MSHDA's newest board chair, Florise Neville-Ewell shakes hands with executive director Michael DeVos. Nevill-Ewell was elected for a term beginning July 2005 and ending January 2007.*

## MSHDA EMBRACES GOVERNOR'S JOBS TODAY INITIATIVE IN TRAVERSE CITY

**Job Opportunities Heat Up in State's Newest Cool City**

**A**t least 200 new full-time construction workers are on the job in Traverse City as a result of Governor Jennifer M. Granholm's Jobs Today initiative, MSHDA announced at a news conference in Traverse City. That is in addition to 275 year-long jobs in construction and related building trades due to loans to developers during the last two years to construct affordable housing rental developments in Traverse City.

MSHDA executive director Michael DeVos was in Traverse City Tuesday visiting one of the Authority's newest developments, Village Glen Apartments, a 120-unit family rental project in Garfield Township.

"We are delighted to be in Traverse City highlighting one of our newest affordable housing projects," DeVos said. "Not only are we creating jobs in the spirit of the governor's Jobs Today initiative, but we are also creating affordable housing for those with fewer housing options."

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# ACTION PLAN KICKOFF — FOCUS IS ON PEOPLE

In the last issue of Building Blocks, we outlined our goal to develop a five-year plan that we believe will foster a single community of affordable housing ambassadors to serve the needs of Michigan residents who have the fewest housing options.

The five-year action plan will be developed over the coming year and will be a community plan, not a MSHDA plan. To achieve this goal, we have created workgroups covering affordable housing issues of concern to all of us. Members of all interested organizations were invited to join the workgroup related to their specific concerns. Internally, we have created six workgroups that will address operational and staff issues here at MSHDA. The workgroups are:

## EXTERNAL

- Aging in Place
- Preservation of Federally Assisted Housing
- Public Awareness
- Neighborhood Revitalization and Community Development
- Supportive Housing
- Ending Homelessness
- Homeownership
- Voucher Strategies & Process
- Multifamily Housing
- Land Use
- Detroit Partnership

## INTERNAL

- Information Technology
- Financial Strength
- Relationships
- Resource Acquisition
- Valuing MSHDA Employees
- Action Plans & Performance Measures

Recently, on a sunny July day, over 200 representatives from Michigan's affordable housing community gathered to participate

in the Five-Year Action Plan Workgroup Kickoff. The purpose of this meeting was to present the vision, goals, principles, and timeline of the workgroups, and to give the participants an opportunity to meet in their various groups for the first time.

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**It was not the notion of a plan that brought us together. Instead, we want a common vision.**

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All participants were encouraged to bring their ideas to the table so they may be included in the plan. As we move forward together, we want to be sure that, at every turn, people are reaching out: reaching out for perspective, input and participation. It's important for everyone to think outside of the box and not be afraid of change.

Action Plan participants were asked to honor several principles as we create and implement Michigan's Five-Year Affordable Housing Community Action Plan.

**First**, the mission is paramount: this work is done to improve people's lives. We will engage in both economic and non-economic activities.

**Second**, we intend to build an inclusive, warm, affordable housing community.

**Third**, we will have a Culture of Excellence:

- Participants will see themselves as leaders and entrepreneurs.
- We will demonstrate our respect of all participants' perspectives.
- We will promote constructive dialogue.
- We will imbue values of quality:



Michael DeVos

- Systems of measurement
- Systems for Partner feedback
- Systemic approach to value staff
- Recognition, including national.

**Finally**, we will continue to value interagency collaboration and foster this throughout the strategic planning process and implementation.

I knew the message was getting through when I overheard comments such as, "This doesn't feel like MSHDA," and "As a builder/developer, the message we got from MSHDA has always been about policy. Now you're asking *us* what *we* think!"

Through all of this, however, it's important to note that it was not the notion of a plan that brought us together. Instead, we want a common vision, one vision that is created by all constituents in a single broad affordable housing community.

And we want that common vision from a cohesive affordable housing community so that collectively we can maximize our potential to improve the lives of those Michigan citizens who have the fewest housing options.

# Employer-Assisted Housing Program Continues to Grow



By Katie Donovan,  
Donovan & Smith Marketing and Media Incorporated

**E**stablished over a year ago, the MSHDA Employer Assisted Housing Program (EAHP) initiative, has moved out of its marketing pilot phase and is gaining momentum as more employers begin to hear about the program. The EAHP was created as a response to Governor Granholm's interest in what employers around the state were doing to retain and recruit workers. MSHDA picked up the challenge by creating a team with representatives from the Office of Single Family Housing and Community Development. The team created a program repackaging existing products such as Down

Payment Assistance and a Single Family Mortgage product coupled with a marketing outreach to employers located in targeted cities in distressed communities and core cities.

The program offers a dollar match for down payment assistance to employers of up to \$5,000 per qualified employee.

"We have refined our program significantly as we have received feedback from interested employers willing to partner with MSHDA," said Cheryl Tulloch from MSHDA's Office of Single Family. "Our team meets once a month to review questions and concerns coming from employers."

In July, three new EAHP partnerships were launched. **The City of Lansing** repackaged an existing program to bring it into line with MSHDA product requirements and to extend the available funds for employees. "Lansing is proud to have been one of the first city governments to offer an employer assisted housing benefit," said Mayor Tony Benavides. "Now that we are experiencing a budget crunch, the MSHDA partnership came along at just the right time. The partnership makes it possible for us to continue to offer this important employee benefit. We

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## Local Housing Leader Selected as Fellow for Harvard University Program

*Tony Lentych, executive director of Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM), was selected by the Fannie Mae Foundation as a Fellow in the July 2005 class of the Fannie Mae Foundation Fellowship Program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government Senior Executives in State and Local Government program. The Fellows are recognized for their commitment to and accomplishments in the field of affordable housing.*

*The 20 Fellows attended an intensive, three-week course,*



*which ran July 10-29, designed to enhance leadership skills, develop new management techniques, and cultivate relationships among public sector colleagues. Following is a first-hand account of Tony's experience.*

**T**here have only been a few moments in my life where I realized in the middle of some experience or activity that it was exceptionally worthwhile. Usually, that effect would not occur until well after the experience or activity was over. And so it was last month in Cambridge, MA. I was sitting in a classroom at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University with 67 folks from around the country and world listening to a lecture on leadership, when it struck me: this class will change me - the way I approach problems, the way I handle situations, and the way I build and maintain relationships. And after

talking with several of my classmates, I don't think I am alone in that assessment.

Prior to July, I thought the best part of the Kennedy School experience would be the three weeks away from the office. And I mean that in all seriousness. After all, what a privilege it would be to leave work for that length of time and immerse myself in a completely different environment. Right? Well, yes and no. While I certainly was away from the office, I had quite a bit of new work thrown at me. But all along, it seemed worth it. The readings were interesting, the faculty was engaging and their lectures were outstanding. And most importantly, the people around me were an impressive lot by any measurement.

I do want to review at least one point about the content of the course because in the end, that's what I expect to stay with me. First,

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# Governor's Initiatives — Cool Cities



## 29 Projects win Cool Cities Neighborhood Designation

**G**overnor Jennifer M. Granholm has announced that 29 projects have been given Cool Cities Neighborhood designations. The Cool Cities Program is part of the Governor's economic plan that is designed to help revitalize Michigan's cities by retaining and attracting the jobs and people critical to the emerging economies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The program is funded by redirecting existing resources in state government.

Thirteen projects have received the Cool Cities "Neighborhoods in Progress" designation, which gives them priority access to existing state grant funds, loans, tax credits, or services that can help create vibrant, mixed-use neighborhoods. They also will receive a catalyst grant of \$100,000 each.

"Building vibrant, energetic cities that attract jobs, people and opportunity to our state is a key component of our economic vision for Michigan," Granholm said. "The first year of Cool Cities exceeded our expectations, so I am pleased to announce that the program has been expanded and incorporates 29 projects across the state. All of these programs announced today will strengthen our neighborhoods and downtowns and attract jobs and people to our state."

Granholm added that the guiding principles of the Cool Cities Initiative are based on best practices used in neighborhoods of the most vibrant communities in the United States and around the world.

New to the Cool Cities Initiative this year are 16 additional projects

that will receive the Cool Cities Neighborhood designation and other state resources as part of the expanded Cool Cities Grants & Planning Programs. Those 16 additional projects were selected for the following new categories: *Cool Cities Michigan Main Street*, *Cool Cities Blueprints for Michigan's Downtowns*, and *Cool Cities Blueprints for Michigan's Neighborhoods*.

Like the Neighborhoods in Progress, these designees will receive "Cool Cities Neighborhood" designation, special consideration for some MEDC and/or MSHDA programs and participation in a State Resource Fair.

The first year participants in the Cool Cities Neighborhood Award program say the designation helped

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### Cool Cities Neighborhoods in Progress Grant Recipients

#### **Battle Creek**

**Applicant:** Battle Creek Unlimited

**Project:** Riverfront Condominium Project

#### **Lansing**

**Applicant:** Allen Neighborhood Center in Partnership with City of Lansing Parks & Recreation

**Project:** Growing in Community: A Walk in the Park

#### **Kalamazoo**

**Applicant:** City of Kalamazoo

**Project:** Washington Square Revitalization

#### **Traverse City**

**Applicant:** City of Traverse City

**Project:** City Opera House Technologies Project

#### **Detroit**

**Applicant:** Woodbridge Neighborhood Development Corporation

**Project:** Woodbridge Cultural Corridor

**Applicant:** New Center Council, Inc.

**Project:** New Center Council Facilities Project

**Applicant:** Greater Corktown Development Corporation

**Project:** Workers Row House Experience

**Applicant:** University Cultural Center Association

**Project:** Woodward Willis Mixed-Use Development

#### **Ann Arbor**

**Applicant:** Ann Arbor Cool Cities Task Force

**Project:** Creative Interactions: An Urban Catalyst

#### **Holland**

**Applicant:** Park Theatre Foundation

**Project:** Park Theatre

#### **East Lansing**

**Applicant:** City of East Lansing

**Project:** Downtown East Lansing Pedestrian/Technology Connection

#### **Grand Rapids**

**Applicant:** West Grand Neighborhood Organization

**Project:** Turner Gateway Project

**Applicant:** Roosevelt Park Neighborhood Association

**Project:** Grandville Avenue Renovation Project

# Improving the Lives of Michigan Citizens



## Retiree Purchases Home with Help of MSHDA Helps out Community in Return

By Ashley Mead,  
Communications Coordinator

Retirement brought about financial struggles for one Detroit resident, leaving him searching for an affordable home. Delbert Craig, a retired General Motors employee had been considering purchasing a condominium but found them to be too expensive for his fixed income. A vision from Craig's deceased father pointed him in the direction of a neighborhood where his parents had lived; where he found the house he believes he was meant to live in.

"My father's spirit led me to these houses that I just loved. I looked them over and immediately found the one that was meant to be mine," said Craig.

Although his credit was far from perfect, Craig found a way to own the house he had dreamed about. Working with Fannie Mae and the MSHDA programs, he was able to buy a home he could call his own.

"The folks at MSHDA believed in me and I promised that I wouldn't

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**Without the help of MSHDA and the Fannie Mae Foundation, he could not have afforded a house on his own**

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let them down, so here I am!" Craig said proudly.

The house and the neighborhood have been accommodating for him, and he is thrilled to be where he is at both physically and financially. Without the help of MSHDA and the Fannie Mae Foundation, he could not have afforded a home of his own. Pride and excitement are two emotions that are not unfamiliar to Craig

now that he is a homeowner.

"I'm really proud of it," said Craig. "It was very affordable and it was nice. I have quite a few dreams and plans for this place."

These dreams are slowly coming true as he begins new projects around the house every day. His enjoyment of homeownership shows in the improvements he has made.

"I have worked on the yard a lot and I plan to do more. There are lots of projects to do, especially with the back yard. I have the front looking pretty good," boasts Craig.

Even the neighbors have started following suit. They witness Craig's ambition to spruce up his yard and have begun to work on their yards in the same manner. Not only did Craig receive the house of his dreams, he has also found a way to help out his community along the way.

"This is exactly what I want. It fits me perfectly."

## Employer-Assisted Housing Program Continues to Grow

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have just recently celebrated our 200<sup>th</sup> employee served through this program and look forward to many more with the help of MSHDA."

The Detroit Medical Center (DMC) dubbed their brand new program "The Governor's Walk to Work Program" and had 68 employees attend an informational meeting. Many employees decided to move forward immediately by taking a MSHDA-certified Homeownership Class so that they could begin shopping for a home in the area

adjacent to the hospital campus. Located in the Midtown Detroit area, the DMC employees will find many options to choose from with over 3,000 units of new or rehabilitated housing coming to the market over the next two years. DMC plans on offering 10 employee benefits on a first-come, first-served basis before the end of the year and hopes to continue the program in 2006.

Albion College is expecting to hire at least 30 new employees this fall, many of them new professors. President Peter Mitchell was very

enthusiastic about establishing an EAHP partnership with MSHDA to help recruit these new employees. The Albion College EAH program was announced to employees in early July. "This is good for the college and good for the City of Albion," said Mitchell.

For more information on the MSHDA EAHP partnership, prospective employers should contact the marketing coordinator, Katie Donovan of Donovan & Smith Marketing and Media Incorporated at 517-485-7237.

# Housing Authority Elects New Leadership

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DeVos as executive director, setting in motion the creation of landmark advances in affordable housing for low- and moderate-income residents, as well as for those at risk of homelessness, throughout the state of Michigan.

"It is indeed an honor to be elected chair of a board with such an outstanding reputation for helping to house Michigan residents who have the fewest housing options," Neville-Ewell said. "It gives me the opportunity to combine my skill set as a real estate attorney with my passion to help people become homeowners. I also have an overwhelming commit-

ment to help end homelessness, and the Authority's new executive director shares that same passion."

Glieberman, the owner and president of several real estate development and finance companies headquartered in Novi, shares similar feelings as the new board vice chair.

"I look forward to working with our new chair and the board and also with the new director. He has extensive experience and we both share the same philosophy about affordable housing," Gliberman said. "It is an honor to have been called upon to use my years of experience to benefit affordable housing throughout the state."

According to DeVos, the elec-

tions are well timed and bring a wealth of expertise and commitment to the Authority's core mission of creating and preserving decent affordable housing for low- and moderate-income Michigan residents.

"We are very fortunate to have these two individuals aboard," DeVos said. "They both embrace the Authority's vision of creating a unified affordable housing community throughout the state of Michigan. With their leadership skills and significant talents, they will be two of the best affordable housing ambassadors the Authority could possibly have leading the way to more affordable housing for those having the fewest housing options."

## Local Housing Leader Selected as Fellow

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there seems to be considerable conflict within elected officials between the desire to be both a trustee of the people and a delegate from a community, and in the end they cannot be both at all times.

This tension affects how elected officials will vote on a variety of issues, including when they are asked to vote in direct opposition to personal beliefs or values. One telling example of this was revealed when one of my classmates, a state senator from Brooklyn, talked about working with several of his neighborhood groups to stop a low-income housing development from being built. Even though he believed in the project, he had to listen to his constituents - and all of the other members of the class applauded his stance. Or so he

thought. I stopped him in the hall outside of class and told him what I thought of his actions. He laughed and said, "Yeah, I suppose you wouldn't have appreciated that story."

Yes, considering what I do for a living, I didn't appreciate his ac-

tions in that particular situation. I do, however, appreciate the opportunity to understand why he did what he did and I thanked him for sharing his internal struggles. And in the end, I do actually have sympathy for elected officials, like my new friend from Brooklyn, when faced with tough decisions.

And now, most importantly, I trust that in the future he can understand why those of us on this side of the debate thought he was dead wrong in his decision to stop a much-needed facility from being built.

While that is just one story of one afternoon in the program, I hope it gives a glimpse of what it was like. I got to know some great people - yes, many great elected officials. I got to hear their stories, problems, conflicts and even mistakes. And they all got to meet me. Let's hope they don't cross Michigan off their "places to visit" lists because of the crazy advocates that reside there.

For more information on the Fannie Mae Foundation's Fellowship program, visit [www.fanniemaefoundation.org/grants/kennedy\\_school.shtml](http://www.fanniemaefoundation.org/grants/kennedy_school.shtml)





# New Family Development Opens in Lansing

A grand opening ceremony was held recently for Philip C. Dean Apartments, 48 units of family rental housing in Lansing. Special guests included Mayor Tony Benavides, Gary Heidel of MSHDA, and National Equity Fund's Mike Jacobs.

"The Philip C. Dean Apartments represent a significant milestone for Ferris Development and Lansing's southside," said Ferris' executive director and co-founder Roger Newcomb. "We are excited to have the first residents move in this month."

The development will be located on the site of one of Lansing's first nursing care facilities. The building had been out of service and vacant for years. The 48-units are two-, three- and four-bedroom family apartments. The site has six buildings designed in a craftsman style. This development will bring the total number of affordable housing units created or preserved by Ferris Development to nearly 200.

Philip C. Dean is a 1971 graduate of the University of Michigan Law School. Prior to co-founding

Ferris Development in 1994, Dean was in private practice in Lansing for over twenty years. He was also the chairman of the local American Civil Liberties Union for 10 years where he donated countless hours of pro bono work.



It was during this time that Dean developed a deeply held belief that everyone has the right to have access to safe and affordable housing. Dean retired from active work at Ferris Development five years ago following health problems.

"What an honor this is," said Dean. "It is my hope that this development will be viewed as an important step toward solving the affordable housing crisis in Lansing."

"Philip C. Dean Apartments have been long in the making, and I am proud to celebrate its opening," said Tom Hay, president of Ferris' board of directors. "Phil Dean has been a great role model for those of us who believe in the importance of quality housing for low- and moderate-income families."

Ferris Development is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit affordable housing developer based in Lansing. In addition to housing development activities, Ferris provides pre-homeownership counseling monthly and financial literacy courses once each quarter for eight weeks. All classes are free. Visit [www.ferris.org](http://www.ferris.org) for more information or call 517-485-9100.



*The entrance of the newly-opened Philip C. Dean Apartments*



*Gary Heidel, director of Program Policy and Market Research, MSHDA*

## 29 Projects win Cool Cities Neighborhood Designation

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create 400 new jobs and retain 500 existing jobs. The year-old program enabled 19 projects to have priority access to more than \$100 million in existing grants, loans and other resources. As a result of the first-year success, the Cool Cities Grants & Planning Programs was created to include the aforementioned Neighborhoods in Progress, in addition to other programs aimed at building vibrant, energetic cities that attract jobs, people and opportunity to Michigan.

### MSHDA EMBRACES GOVERNOR'S JOBS TODAY INITIATIVE IN TRAVERSE CITY

**Job Opportunities Heat Up in State's Newest Cool City**

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DeVos explained how the Jobs Today initiative works. "This rapid infusion of state, local and private investment in important community resources, such as affordable housing and improved living centers for seniors, will not only create immediate jobs but help retain businesses that already call Michigan home," he said. "That is what is happening in Traverse City."

DeVos also pointed out that Traverse City was recently awarded a Cool Cities grant to improve downtown land use to include mixed retail, office and residential areas.

"Affordable housing is economic and community development, and the Cool Cities grant will further that goal here in Traverse City" DeVos said. "The city is expecting to create more than 200 jobs and likely to create even more indirectly with the Cool Cities grant."

Historically, the Authority has created more than 50 jobs through community development projects that provide grant money to nonprofit organizations that rehabilitate homes or build new ones for low- to moderate-income families who otherwise could not afford to be homeowners. They also use grant funds to refurbish or build affordable rental developments.

"In addition, MSHDA also has created more than 200 jobs in the Traverse City area through the awarding of Low Income Housing Tax Credits during the last two years," DeVos said. "That equates to 265 units of affordable housing for families, the elderly and people with special needs."

A multi-agency team reviewed each application, looking for those that demonstrated close partnerships with existing community organizations and the private sector and offered plans for creating large-scale neighborhood or community improvement. The projects not designated as part of this program will receive individual letters offering constructive feedback to their submission.

#### **Cool Cities Programs and recipients:**

##### **2005 Cool Cities Michigan Main Street:**

Ishpeming, Grand Haven, Howell, and Midland.

##### **2005 Cool Cities Blueprints for**

##### **Michigan's Downtowns:**

Big Rapids, Vassar, Utica, Romeo, East Tawas, Grass Lake, Iron River, Whitehall, and Saginaw.

##### **2005 Cool Cities Blueprints for**

##### **Michigan's Neighborhoods:**

Vassar, Alpena, and Manistee.



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